

the austere yet lighter shades of oats and rye. Colour is lent by blue flax, red and white poppies and verdant green fields.

The view is dominated by range upon sweeping range of eternal mountains. White highways curve gracefully up and again down the steep slopes. Everywhere at the highest point stands a dark-green forest of pines. At times the ground stops abruptly, and you can see whence the gigantic stone masses fell—and are falling still today—which formerly crowned above field and forest as ancient mountains. A precipice drops steeply away, the debris of fallen stone-masses lying at its foot among the many trees. Past great piles of stones large and small flow the Thaya and the Kamp, sweeping stones with them. They swirl in endless bends around the foot of cliff after cliff. About their sheer walls stand defiant castles and dreamy ruins.

Once you were invited to visit the forest district. For a whole day you journeyed through the woods and then you were forced to stop. Before you arose a great baroque tower, below it a forest of gothic pillars reaching towards the heavens, cloisters and a shaded well, the whole complicated gothic blossoming and romanesque fading—the monastery of Zwettl in its lovely situation on the banks of the swift-flowing Kamp amidst mighty forests. Continuing, you came to the frontier, high above. A piece of secular and chivalric history confronted you like a rock—Heidenreichstein, the most beautiful river-castle of the Province.

Usage and custom are rooted in the soil of the woodlands. On the house gables appear May blossoms in many colours. Young men plant green fir-trees, decorated with waving ribbons, for their girls. Mischievous "May paths" are devised with sawdust or water mixed with lime which are suddenly found leading over streets and byways from a certain door to another, thus making public what the parties concerned had kept a closely-guarded secret.

In many places the winter evenings still see the traditional "Rockreise". Women and girls "visit" friends in order to spin thread. Softly the delicate wheels turn, young men come and sing, and the women and girls tell stories of the robber chief Grasl, of the wicked Waldschrat and of God's vengeance on the inquisitive girl. Here and there an old loom is still standing.



Apricot Gathering in the Wachau District.

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Kraab-on-the-Thaya.

of the Pulkau, in the Danube area—and in China.

BEAUTIFUL IS OUR SUMMER!

Millions of vines reaching out towards the setting sun, a low, thick-set endless forest of pale green. Before you the fertile valley in its lovely frame. Ahead, hundreds and thousands of fields, ribands of flame through which one can walk for two hours, golden seas of shimmering grain. And in between, green clover and vegetables, caught in the rays of the setting sun.

In the middle of the valley, along the Pulkau, lie the villages. Large and solid roofs, a strong, bulky tower, and round about a circle of trees characterise the isolated vineyard

market-towns and villages. They are large and straggling settlements, virile in character. You should pay them a visit and enter one of the houses. A strong and penetrant smell of home-made bread, bubbling pots, flour-bins, eiderdowns bursting with feathers, the breath of man and beast, warmth of straw and stables will greet you with familiar welcome.

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Where the valley sweeps broadly round are again pale green hills, vineyard upon vineyard. Next comes a wooded mountain, its crest gracefully sloping down and leading the eye on to the great beech and oak forests of Ernstbrunn. Hard is the life of the peasants here—never-ending round of toil. On winter nights when the vines are endangered, they tend the fires whose smoke fights the frosts. When at last they have completed the protection of the vineyards against damp, against drought, against insect pests, they turn, weary and worn, to the fields awaiting the reaper. As black clouds gather they fear for both. Through sleepless nights they aid the beasts in the struggle to bear their young. When they go to haul the trunks of great oaks from the forests, it is midnight before the horses are fed. The population has preserved its ancient manner of speech, as lively and as deeply rich as the ocean. The forces of long past centuries and an ancient homeland linger on in word and custom. Marriage splendours, the dance of the vintage, "Weizauslösen" (de-husking the grain) and "Federnschleissen" (stripping the feathers of their down) lend colour to days and nights.

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In summer everyone should see a "Kirtag" (church festival). This is more than an annual fair, it is the great festival of the year, two days and two nights of feasting

261/574 to offer unlimited entertainment and hospitality. For these people it is wrong to close one's doors to anyone, no matter whom."

Early Austrian guide books praise Viennese hospitality in the same way. The Viennese, according to many later accounts, were always fond of eating and drinking, especially in public places such as the Prater, Schönbrunn or the Augarten, a fact which earned them among foreigners the reputation of being heavy eaters. It was also their custom always to cook something special for the guest and to feed him lavishly.

261 But to return to the ancients. The Roman way of life had a greater influence on the stomachs of the Viennese than did that of the Teutons. In ancient Rome eating was a science in which delicate tastes were combined with unlimited luxury. Over the city on the Tiber hovered the spirit of culinary art. According to Plutarch, Caesar understood how to plan banquets with as much care and forethought as battles. Horace and Ovid reveal to us great interest in food and drink, refined by poetry. Ovid describes how a young man dipped his fingers in red wine during a feast in order to write a declaration of love on a small table. The feasts of Lucullus are still proverbial today and the gluttonous orgies of the parvenue Trimalchion are known to us through the tales of Petronius. Many a Viennese may have felt a spiritual bond with Cato as he repeated with a sigh his complaint: "How hard a thing it is to try to talk to one's belly, which has no ears to hear."

262 Cabbage, which they like to serve in Vienna as a garniture to the traditional beef, was known to the gods of the Greeks. It originated from the tears which the Thracian Prince Lycurgus shed when Bacchus bound him to a vine-pole for frivolously destroying grapes. The ancient Egyptians could consume quantities of beer and wine without getting drunk because they ate cooked cabbage before beginning their drinking bouts. Cato recommended the same practice to Roman drinkers.

Lettuce was sacred to Aphrodite because she once hid the new-born Adonis among lettuces. To the Greek gods salads came third among their favourite foods, following nectar and ambrosia. Viennese cannot have forgotten this, for in the preparation of this olympic dish they employ qualities required by other favourites of the gods, the poets—imagination, perseverance, instinct and the gift of composition.

527 262 The egg, which is supposed to have given birth to many divine, heroic and unwordly beings, was associated by the Teutons with hares, brightly coloured eggs being sacrificed at the feast of Ostara, the Goddess of Spring, whose favourite animal was the hare. Until the early Middle Ages it was the custom for godparents to bring painted eggs as present, to the christening. Searching for Easter eggs is still a pleasing custom in all parts of the Austrian provinces, and there is hardly a table at Easter which is not decorated with coloured eggs.